FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 8, 2014

Contact: Communications Office
(850) 245-4111

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ACKNOWLEDGES INTERNATIONAL FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AWARENESS DAY

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health acknowledges that September 9, 2014 is recognized as International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day. FASDs are a group of conditions that can cause birth defects and developmental disabilities in a baby whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. Pregnant women and women who are considering becoming pregnant should abstain from alcohol consumption to eliminate alcohol-exposed pregnancies and FASDs.

"Moms have important opportunities to improve the health of their babies before and during pregnancy," said Deputy Secretary for Health and Deputy State Health Officer for Children's Medical Services Celeste Philip. "These steps include scheduling regular prenatal visits with a health care professional, maintaining a healthy weight, taking a prenatal vitamin, not smoking and avoiding alcohol during pregnancy."

It is important to know that there is no safe amount or type of alcohol to consume during pregnancy, and any woman is at risk of having a child with an FASD if she drinks alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol consumption can affect an expecting mother even before she realizes she is pregnant and unplanned pregnancies pose one of the greatest challenges to preventing FASD. Women who drink early during their pregnancy and stop once they realize they are pregnant are still at risk. Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should make sure they talk with their health care provider about strategies for avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

There is no cure for FASDs, but research shows that early intervention treatment services can improve a child's development. The Department offers several preventive health services such as Family Planning to both males and female, including teens, in all of Florida's 67 counties. Family Planning includes programs such as Healthy Start which assist pregnant women, inter-conceptional women, infants, and children up to age 3 obtain the health care and social support needed to reduce the risks for poor maternal and child health. Healthy start also offers prenatal and Infant Risk Screening which may help detect FASD.

Other programs include the Florida Center for Early Childhood, which offer screening and diagnostic services for families in need. They can be reached at (800) 587-1385 or via the web: http://www.thefloridacenter.org/FASD.php.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Facts
- Alcohol use during pregnancy can cause birth defects and developmental disabilities collectively known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs).
- Signs of FASD can be both physical such as poor coordination or intellectual such as poor memory.
- There is no guaranteed safe level of alcohol use at any time during pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant. All kinds of alcohol should be avoided, including red or white wine, beer, and liquor.

Florida Department of Health
Office of Communications
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1705
PHONE: 850/245-4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

www.FloridaHealth.gov
TWITTER:HealthyFLA
FACEBOOK:FLDepartmentofHealth
YOUTUBE: fldoh

- Alcohol can cause problems for a developing baby throughout pregnancy, including before a woman knows she is pregnant.
- According to the 2011 Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Survey (PRAMS) 8% of mothers reported alcohol use during pregnancy.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. During 2014, the Department is recognizing 125 years of public health in Florida with educational opportunities and events. Please visit www.FLHealth125.gov for more information.

Follow us on Twitter at @HealthyFla and on Facebook. For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

###